



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Milwaukee County

ROB HENKEN, Director

January 12, 2006

Dear DHHS Staff:

I wanted to take this opportunity to wish all of you a happy and healthy new year, and to share with you some of my thoughts regarding DHHS' direction and priorities in 2006.

First of all, I hope that all of you share my feelings of satisfaction and pride regarding some of the Department's important accomplishments in 2005. These include the following:

- Our **Behavioral Health Division** successfully implemented several innovative strategies to keep its inpatient census under control and avert backlogs at its Psychiatric Crisis Service. One of those strategies – a partnership with Rogers Memorial Hospital – resulted in the Division being awarded a “Health Care Heroes” award by the Small Business Times. BHD also has shown remarkable skill in implementing its AODA Redesign/Access to Recovery program, which has been nationally recognized and is bringing a new level of comprehensive alcohol and drug abuse treatment services to County residents.
- The General Assistance Medical Program administered by our **County Health Programs Division** continued to receive widespread community praise and recognition, including positive feedback in a recent report from the Public Policy Forum. Meanwhile, CHP's Emergency Medical Services program maintained the impressive level of service that has earned it a ranking as one of the top three Paramedic systems in the country by USA Today.
- The efforts of our **Delinquency and Court Services Division** to create and sustain effective community-based alternatives resulted in record-low commitments of delinquent youth to costly State-run juvenile corrections institutions. This produced a \$3.9 million surplus in 2005 and – even more important – generated better outcomes for troubled kids. Our ability to project continued success in this area in 2006 was critical to the preservation of positions and services in our 2006 Budget. It is also testimony to the skilled work of the Division's case managers and support staff who work on community-based programs.

- Our **Disabilities Services Division** successfully and professionally persevered through a major change in State policy regarding institutional placements for persons with developmental disabilities, the closure of several nursing homes, and the downsizing of our own Hilltop Intermediate Care Facility. Despite the significant challenges posed by those developments, DSD was able to serve dozens of individuals from its waiting list in 2005, and was able to successfully plan and implement the addition of the Children's Long-Term Waiver program to its array of services.
- Our **Economic Support Division** ended Federal Fiscal Year 2005 with a Food Stamp Error Rate of only 5.95%. The magnitude of this accomplishment can only be appreciated when it is compared with the FFY 2004 Error Rate of 9.1%, the FFY 2003 Error Rate of 11.8%, and Error Rates between 1994 and 2002 that were never lower than 13%! ESD also successfully implemented a new walk-in verification center that is providing an enhanced level of timely and efficient service to Income Maintenance customers.
- In our **Management Services Division**, the Operations Section skillfully guided us through our moves out of Schlitz Park and our consolidation at the Coggs Center, which is saving \$1.3 million in our 2006 Budget; the Contract Administration Section launched a new initiative that will ultimately result in all DHHS contracts being outcomes-based and performance-driven; and our Fiscal Services Section's strategic management of our finances allowed us to avert program and staff cuts in our 2006 Budget and turn back more than \$4 million to the County's bottom line in 2005.
- Both the **Behavioral Health Division** and **Economic Support Division** played major roles in the care and support of Hurricane Katrina evacuees. BHD maintained a continuously operating clinic at the Tommy Thompson Center at State Fair for more than four weeks, treating more than 100 persons for both pre-existing conditions and trauma caused by their experience. ESD also maintained a continuous presence at the Tommy Thomson Center to sign up evacuees for Food Share and Medical Assistance, and ESD staff at the Coggs Center worked overtime to process an influx of applications from evacuees. Staff for both divisions demonstrated remarkable kindness and commitment that reflected well on all of DHHS.

I am pleased to say that I am not the only one who is impressed with our work. In fact, on March 9, 2006, our Department will be honored prior to the regular meeting of the County Board by Supervisor Elizabeth Coggs-Jones and her 18 colleagues for our many accomplishments in 2005. I wish that every DHHS employee could be there, but that's obviously not possible. However, I have asked each of our five division administrators to select one employee who exemplifies our commitment to quality and compassionate service to join them at the County Board event on behalf of all of our employees.

While there are many successes upon which we can reflect as we enter the new year, there are clearly many, many more challenges that await us in 2006. Our effort to provide safety net services to our most vulnerable citizens remains extremely difficult in light of the fiscal restrictions facing all levels of government. Those restrictions, of course, are combined with increasing need and demand for our services. The words that I wrote to all DHHS employees on

the day of my confirmation in September 2004 remain paramount today: *Our ability to provide these services...depends not only on showing the compassion and dedication that traditionally have been a hallmark of our profession, but also on exhibiting the fiscal acumen and stewardship that will enable us to make the most of our existing resources.*

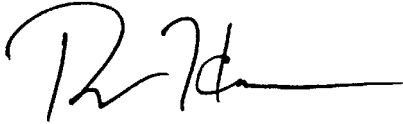
As I look ahead to 2006, I see a continuation of our fruitful efforts to avail ourselves of every source of State and Federal revenue we can identify to support our programs, as well as our efforts to ensure that every dollar we spend is spent wisely and is consistent with our overall goals and objectives. I also see the following as top departmental priorities:

- **Deciding the future of our Mental Health Complex facilities.** With the help of outside consulting assistance, we will determine if there are potential alternative locations to house our inpatient and nursing home operations that are consistent with our mission and fiscal and programmatic needs. If there are, then we will engage our policymakers on a proposed plan of action. If there are not, then we will instead begin planning the investments we need to succeed in our present location, and develop strategies for subletting or otherwise utilizing our vacant space.
- **Creating a sustainable future for GAMP.** We will continue to explore alternative models and funding sources for GAMP with the Health Care Policy Task Force. It is my hope that by the end of 2006, we will have a better-defined program – as well as a plan for funding that program – that will avert the annual funding crises that have engulfed GAMP during the past several years.
- **Responding to the growth in Disabilities Long-Term Support programs.** DSD's Long-Term Support programs have grown exponentially during the past few years as greater numbers of individuals with disabilities have moved to community-based settings. We will explore and begin implementing a new IT system and accompanying fiscal and policy initiatives that will accommodate this program growth, and allow for better case management, improved rate-setting and enhanced fiscal management.
- **Enhancing customer service for Income Maintenance.** A new phone system that will include a 24-hour automated option will be implemented early in 2006 to provide better customer service to our Income Maintenance clients. Led by a newly created Customer Service Manager position and unit, we will also build on the progress of the walk-in verification center and improve all levels of customer service for those seeking IM assistance.

These are just a few of the big-picture initiatives that will be receiving considerable attention in 2006. They will be complimented, of course, by several additional initiatives in each division. I have also identified four department-wide initiatives that I plan to personally coordinate in 2006: creation of an IT Task Force to strategically plan for the IT needs of our entire department; a full-court press to ensure Civil Rights compliance throughout all of our service areas; a review of departmental work rules with an eye toward ensuring consistent application and enforcement; and a review of our role and policies with regard to disaster preparedness.

So, as you can see, 2006 will be a very busy year. As we proceed, I welcome your thoughts and suggestions via e-mail, phone and/or the new suggestion box located in the Coggs Center cafeteria. Thank you again for all of your hard work during 2005, and thank you in advance for joining me in working toward even more impressive achievements in 2006.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Henken", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rob Henken
Director